Student Handout – A Population Chronology of Fairfax County

c.1250   Indian tribes settle in what is now Fairfax County.

1608   Captain John Smith explores the upper Potomac River.

1742   Fairfax County established by House of Burgesses; named for William, 6th, Lord of Fairfax. Included what are today Arlington, Loudoun Counties, and the Cities of Alexandria, Falls Church, and Fairfax.

1749   City of Alexandria organized.
County population estimated to be less than 10,000, 28% were slaves.

1782   Slave population estimated to be 41% of the population.

1790   Estimated population is 12,000.

1791   Virginia General Assembly cedes a part of Fairfax County (today's Arlington County) to the national government for use as the new national capital of Washington, D.C.; returned to VA in 1847 and organized as Arlington County.

1800   Fairfax Courthouse established in present location; served as the governing body of the county; overworked soils causes economic decline; plantation economy ends; many slaves sold out of the area.

1840   Estimated population is 9,370.

1860   Estimated population is 11,800.

1870   Estimated population is 12,000.
Local government control shifts from the county court to a Board of Supervisors system; County establishes first public grammar schools.

1906   First high school opens; economy based on mixed agricultural production improves as northern farmers move to the county.

1930   Population estimated at 25,000.

1940   Population estimated at 40,000.

1950   Population 248,000, due to WW II and growth in national government employment; diversified service economy overtakes agricultural base.

1960   Population 248,897; migration from cities to suburbs gains momentum.

1970   Population is 454,275.

1980   Population is 596,901; economy dominated by service and government-related activity.

1990   Population is 818,584 (doubled in twenty years).

1999   Population is 948,636, economy dominated by high-tech and international companies.

2010   Population estimated to be 1,082,811.